

Total
KNEE
REPLACEMENT



Knee Surgery to Reduce Pain
and Improve Movement

A Painful Knee Joint

You use your knee every time you take a step. Because of this, living with a worn or injured knee joint can be painful and frustrating. Even simple things, such as climbing stairs, may cause pain. But you don't have to live this way. In many cases, all or part of the damaged knee joint can be replaced. This booklet will help you learn what knee replacement means for you. It can also help answer many of your questions.



What Causes a Painful Knee Joint?

No matter what your age, a problem with the knee joint may keep you from activities you enjoy. Pain and stiffness may even limit the daily tasks you can do. Problems with the knee joint tend to build up over time. Your knee pain may be caused by any of the following:

- Wear and tear from years of constant use (**osteoarthritis**)
- A chronic illness (**inflammatory arthritis**)
- An old injury that did not heal properly (**post-traumatic arthritis**)

Surgery Can Help

An **orthopedic surgeon** is a doctor who treats bone and joint problems. To determine if surgery is a good option for you, your surgeon will examine you and your knee joint. The results of this evaluation help your surgeon best plan your treatment. When suggesting a knee replacement, your surgeon thinks about how surgery can best benefit you over your lifetime. Talk to your surgeon about these benefits and any risks of surgery.

Benefits of Knee Replacement

After a knee replacement, you can look forward to moving more easily. Most people gain all of the benefits listed below. Knee replacement surgery usually:

- Stops or greatly reduces joint pain. Even the pain from surgery should go away within months.
- Increases leg strength. Without knee pain, you'll be able to use your legs more. This will build up your muscles.
- Improves your quality of life by allowing you to do daily tasks and low-impact activities in greater comfort.
- Provides years of easier movement. Knee replacements can last up to 15 to 20 years, even longer in some cases. (How long your own replacement joint will last depends on several factors, including your age, weight, and activity level.)



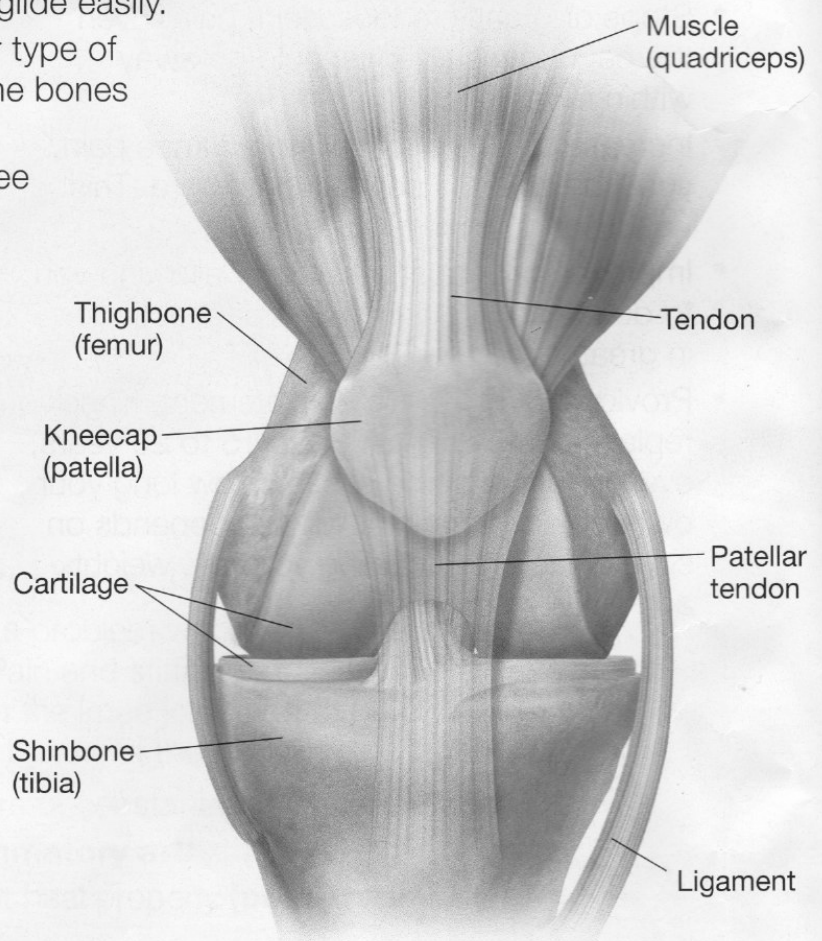
How the Knee Works

A healthy knee bends easily. The joint absorbs stress and glides smoothly. This allows you to walk, squat, and turn without pain. But when the knee is damaged, the joint may not be able to move the way it should. This leads to pain and trouble with movement. A damaged knee joint will often swell. It may catch and grind. And it may hurt even when at rest.

A Healthy Knee

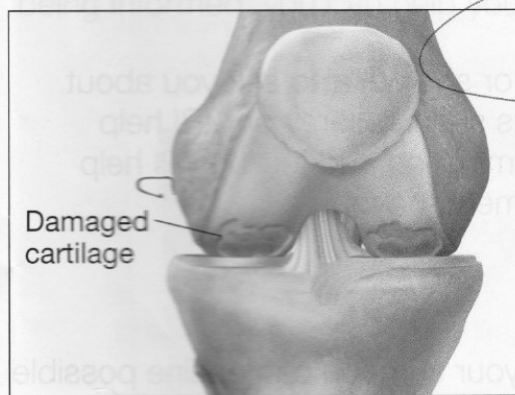
The knee is a hinge joint, formed where the thighbone and shinbone meet. When the knee is healthy, the joint moves freely.

- **Cartilage** is a layer of smooth, slippery, cushioning tissue. It covers the ends of the thighbone and shinbone, and it lines the underside of the kneecap. Healthy cartilage absorbs stress and allows the knee to glide easily.
- **Ligaments** are another type of soft tissue. They hold the bones of the joint together.
- **Muscles** power the knee and leg for movement.
- **Tendons** attach the muscles to the bones.



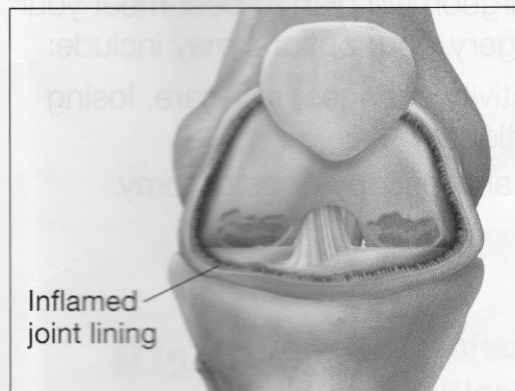
A Damaged Knee

Over time, cartilage can become worn and damaged. Cartilage cannot fully repair itself, so damage likely keeps getting worse. At first, the joint may just be a little stiff. As damaged cartilage and the bone underneath begin rubbing together, pain is often felt.



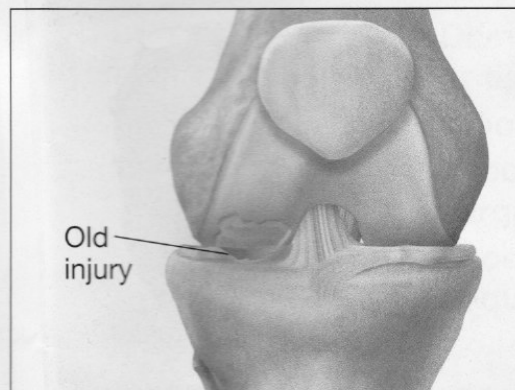
Osteoarthritis

Years of normal use and aging can cause cartilage to break down and wear away. Exposed bones rubs together and become irritated and rough. The joint may feel like it's grinding. Being overweight or having an alignment problem, such as knocked or bowed knees, puts extra force on the joint. This may speed up the damage.



Inflammatory Arthritis

A chronic disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout, can cause swelling and heat (inflammation) in the joint lining. As the disease progresses, cartilage may be worn away and the joint may stiffen.



Post-Traumatic Arthritis

A bad fall or blow to the knee can injure the joint. If the injury does not heal properly or is not correctly aligned, extra force may be placed on the joint. Over time, this can cause the cartilage to wear away.

Is Surgery Right for You?

Your doctor will examine your knee to determine the causes of your knee pain. Based on your evaluation and diagnosis, you may have several options for treatment. You and your surgeon will discuss these options and decide on your care. Knee replacement surgery may offer the best chance for relieving your pain.

Evaluating Your Knee

The surgeon will examine your knee. He or she will also ask you about any past medical problems. Imaging tests such as x-ray or MRI help show damage to the knee joint. This examination and testing will help your surgeon recommend the best treatment for you.

Your Treatment Options

Based on the results of your evaluation, your surgeon can outline possible options for treatment. He or she will also discuss the benefits and risks of these options. Together, you and your surgeon will plan to best meet your needs. Along with knee replacement surgery, your options may include:

- **Nonsurgical treatments**, such as activity changes, self-care, losing excess weight, injections, and medications.
- **Other surgical treatments**, such as arthroscopy or osteotomy.

►► Activity changes and weight loss may be options to help treat your knee pain.



Be Informed

Knee replacement surgery has been recommended to help relieve your pain. Be sure to ask any questions you have. Understand what the procedure can and cannot do for you. Know what the alternatives are and what options you may have. Any surgery has risks, so be clear what the risks are for you. And know what you need to do to prepare for surgery and recover from it. By being informed, you can help your surgeon ensure that your needs are met.



Risks and Complications

As with any surgery, knee replacement has risks and complications. These include:

- Infection at the incision site
- Blood clots in the lungs, legs, or pelvis
- Ongoing knee pain, stiffness, or instability
- Damage to nearby nerves, blood vessels, or tissues
- Blood loss requiring transfusion
- Infection around the implant (requires surgery to fix)
- Loosening or wearing out of the implant (requires surgery to fix)
- Continued pain or problems with the joint



Getting Ready for Surgery

You will likely need to make a few simple changes around the house before surgery. This will help make your recovery safer and easier. Follow the guidelines on these pages.



Prepare Your Home

Before surgery, prepare your home for your return. Start by reducing household hazards. Also, limit the amount of reaching and stair climbing you'll have to do. Try these tips:

- **Prepare an area** on the main living level if you normally sleep upstairs. Or set things up so you have to go upstairs only once a day. Move items such as your TV remote, computer, or phone within easy reach.
- **Stock up** on canned and frozen foods. Also prepare meals in advance and freeze them. Store food and supplies between waist and shoulder level.
- **Pick up clutter.** Remove any throw rugs and tape down electrical cords.



Arrange for Help

After your knee replacement, you won't be able to drive for about a month. Ask a family member or friend to deliver groceries and help you run errands. If you live alone, ask someone to stay with you for a few days after surgery. Plan ahead now and you'll have less to worry about during recovery.

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